

May 29, 2001

Dear SERC Chairperson:

This letter is to bring you up to date on recent activities here at EPA's Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office (CEPPO) and to let you know about some of our plans for the future. As you know, for several years we have had to invest many of our resources into getting the Risk Management Program off the ground. Most recently, we have worked for more than a year to address the Congressional restriction on posting offsite consequences analysis (OCA) information on the Internet. That work is mostly complete and now we are excited to be able to give more attention to the SERCs and LEPCs that are busy implementing chemical safety programs. CEPPO's overall focus is on chemical safety at the local level. We intend to continue hearty support for your work in managing and using EPCRA and RMP information, developing and maintaining current community emergency plans (including a consideration of possible deliberate releases by terrorists), providing chemical hazard information to the public, and working with all interested parties at the local level to prevent accidental releases.

Electronic Communication. For some time now, we have been part of the general trend to develop electronic means of communicating with our various partners, customers and stakeholders. Specifically, we have undertaken the following steps:

1. We post all our regulations, documents and announcements on our website (www.epa.gov/ceppo). We tend not to print large numbers of our documents in hard copy, but rather expect that our customers will download the documents from the web. We believe that this practice is consistent with EPA's emphasis on saving paper as one way to protect the environment. Of course, we continue to make paper copies available to all those without Internet access or anyone else who needs them. In addition, we link to about 900 other sites. If you or any of your LEPCs have a site to which we might link, please let us know.

On our website you will find a "What's New" button that lists all materials as they are added to the site. Similarly, there is a "What's Next" button where you can find a list of products under development along with the anticipated date of completion.

We have begun the process of remodeling our website and hope to reveal our new face early in the Fall of this year. We are happy to receive any comments you might have for improving our website.

2. A few years ago several people on my staff developed list-serves for specific groups of customers to keep them informed of our activities, primarily with respect to the RMP program. We have consolidated all those lists into one CEPPO Listserv that currently has about 2,900 subscribers. This CEPPO Listserv is our primary vehicle for communicating news to our customers. We post messages on almost a weekly basis. I suggest that your key staff and your LEPCs subscribe to the CEPPO Listserv. To do this, go to our website and you will find a blue button "Join CEPPO Listserv!" Click on that button and follow the directions.

3. We have posted a list of LEPC contacts for the entire country (<http://www.epa.gov/ceppo/lepclist.htm>). It is possible for any citizen to enter his/her zip code and immediately find information about the local LEPC. You will note that for each LEPC there is attached a list of RMP facilities whose vulnerable zones affect that LEPC. Individual LEPCs can use this feature to identify RMP facilities with whom they should coordinate planning and accident prevention activities. We are aware that our LEPC contact information is still not fully accurate. We rely on our customers to help us update the LEPC (and SERC) information. We are pleased to hear from your staff as well as from individual LEPCs with current information that we will post within the month.

Counter-Terrorism. We remain committed to assisting LEPCs as they address the possibility that terrorists could cause deliberate releases of dangerous chemicals in the community. We have just published a new Factsheet: "LEPCs and Deliberate Releases: Addressing Terrorist Activities in the Local Emergency Plan." (A copy is attached.) Many of you in emergency management agencies are aware that an executive order is being developed that will assign new duties to FEMA in coordinating Federal, State, and local programs on counter-terrorism (CT) activities. I believe that this emphasis on CT is an opportunity to strengthen LEPCs. Rather than setting up new structures at the local level to address CT, LEPCs need to step up to the challenge in their work on emergency planning and accident prevention. At the Federal level, EPA and other agencies, such as FEMA and DOT, need to work at Headquarters and in the Regions toward assuring that all active partners are fully aware of the SERC/LEPC structure. Let's work together to draw these agencies into our existing State and local groups. If you have any suggestions and/or success stories in this area, please let me know.

Chemical Hazards Related to Power Outages. CEPPO is preparing a chemical safety alert on certain possible effects of power outages. As you know, rolling blackouts and other power outages are expected to increase in frequency and severity as warmer weather approaches. Chemical processes can be affected in two different aspects by a power outage: the initial loss of power and subsequent restart of operations when power is restored. The hazards associated with the initial loss of power are fairly well understood and will not be covered in the alert. The resumption of power may create an even greater hazard than the initial interruption; accordingly, our alert will focus on the second exposure, the one that goes with the resumption of power. As soon as this new alert is available, we will notify our Listserv subscribers and post the alert on our website.

New Tier II Software. Aware that Tier II for Windows does not work on newer computers and having heard from several States that they would like a replacement, CEPPO is

working with NOAA to develop Tier II Submit, a software program that individual States may choose to use for EPCRA section 312 Tier II submissions. I know that several States are having facilities submit Tier II information on line. Some of you have encouraged electronic submission for many years. Our new software will be fully compatible with CAMEO. To help us make the software fully useful to you, I am asking each State to provide us with some information. For example, we would like to know if you would be interested in using Tier II Submit or whether you plan a different approach. If you would like to use our new software, we are asking about any data fields you would like for us to include. Attached is a full description of the information we would like to have. To help us meet this State request for new software, please have your staff complete the attached form and return it George Hull (hull.george@epa.gov) to us by June 15.

Revised CAMEO. As you know, CAMEO is now available free of charge by downloading from the Internet. NOAA reports that between 700 and 1000 copies of CAMEO are being downloaded each month. We are working with NOAA to make some changes in CAMEO. The CAMEO Suite of programs (CAMEO, ALOHA, and MARPLOT) is being updated using Filemaker software, to replace the aging FoxPro and HyperCard applications used in the present versions. Granted the changes, we believe that CAMEO users will easily become familiar with the revised software. Information will be organized similar to CAMEO for Windows. Facility Information, Chemicals in Inventory, Special Locations, and Screening and Scenarios modules for storing your EPCRA data will be retained. We plan to unveil the revised CAMEO in Baltimore (December 10-13) at the combined EPA Region 3 LEPC Conference and Hazmat Spills Conference. Information about this conference will be available on our website; I encourage you, your staff, and LEPCs to attend.

An Update on RMPs. The first round of RMPs was submitted two years ago. We have received just over 15,000 RMPs. As far as we can tell, the compliance rate has been very high. You may be aware that we are unable to make all offsite consequence analysis (OCA) information available on the Internet. Working with the Department of Justice, we have developed alternate ways to make the OCA data available to LEPCs and the public. You can find the details about OCA data availability on our website (access the factsheet at <http://www.epa.gov/ceppo/ap-lere.htm#oca>). I remain convinced that we all need to integrate RMP information into our ongoing chemical safety activities under EPCRA. Preparedness and accident prevention are not separate activities, but are merely different faces of our ongoing common interest in chemical safety. Several States have developed chemical accident prevention programs; many have received full delegation from EPA to run a State program. Many more States have chosen not to operate a full program at this time, but are actively using the RMP information to promote local chemical safety. I and my colleagues in the Regions are happy to commit staff to assist you in whatever way we can to integrate RMP information into your current chemical safety programs. We will support your State's efforts to gain full or partial delegation to operate an RMP program.

Upcoming Meetings. CEPPPO staff have participated in many meetings, workshops, and conferences that include some of you and/or your staff. I have heard very positive reports about the recent NASTTPO meeting, as well as meetings in Massachusetts (EPA Region 1), California (EPA Region 9), Washington (EPA Region 3), Texas (EPA Region 6), Kansas (EPA Region 7),

and Colorado. These reports describe remarkable commitment and expertise, noteworthy partnerships, as well as questions and unresolved issues (old and new). These events inevitably energize my staff, leading us to renewed commitment to learn from you and with you.

We plan some meetings during the next few months. On July 16 - 18 there will be a meeting here in Washington of RMP implementing agencies (State, local, and EPA Regions) as well as State/local agencies with an active interest in the RMP program. You can get further details about this meeting from your Regional CEPP contact. NGA is working to organize a meeting of SERC chairs in Utah in September. This should be something of a change from other recent NGA meetings attended by SERC staff without the chairperson. I hope that you will be able to attend the Utah meeting and bring your key staff if you want. On December 10-13 in Baltimore, CEPP and EPA Region 3 will sponsor a joint conference of the Region 3 SERCs and LEPCs as well as the Hazmat Spills Conference. In addition, I have been asked to speak at the Region 7 LEPC conference in Kansas City in September. I look forward to all of these upcoming meetings and I hope each of you will attend as many of the meetings as you are able.

Let me close by thanking you and your LEPCs for all your fine work. I believe that the national state of response to, preparedness for, and prevention of chemical accidents has improved dramatically since 1986. We will know with more certainty over the next few years, as the Mary Kay O'Connor Process Safety Center at Texas A&M University publishes results of their National Chemical Safety Assessment. I also believe that in time the RMP and similar programs will make all of us more alert to preventing accidental chemical releases. I, along with the CEPP staff in Headquarters and in the Regions, remain ready to help in whatever way we can to assist you in our common task of promoting chemical safety at the local level. You can reach me by telephone at 202-564-8600. You can reach Kathy Jones at 202-564-8353 or by e-mail at jones.kathy@epa.gov, and Bill Finan at 202-564-7981 or finan.bill@epa.gov. I assume that our staffs and the Regional CEPP Offices will continue to work together closely.

Sincerely,

Jim Makris
Director, Chemical Emergency Preparedness
and Prevention Office

Attachments

cc: Michael Shapiro, Acting Assistant Administrator
Steve Luftig, Acting Principal Deputy Administrator
EPA Regional Division Directors for CEPP Programs